

Sts. Peter and Paul's Jesuit Church
Detroit, Michigan
Wayne Co.

HABS No. MI-27-1 ✓
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. 27

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings survey
Branson V. Gamber, District Officer
3500 Union Guardian Building, Detroit, Michigan

HABS
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SAINTS PETER AND PAUL JESUIT CHURCH
Jefferson Avenue and St. Antoine Street
Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

Owner: Jesuits.

Date of Erection: 1844-48; alterations 1857, 1882, 1892, 1908, 1917.

Architects: F. Leto^{UR}ne and Peter Kindekens.

Builder: No record.

Present Condition: Good.

Number of Stories: One.

Materials of Construction: Brick.

Other Existing Records: See text.

Additional Data: See following pages.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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District ^{Mi-}#27 - 1

April 28, 1934.

STS. PETER AND PAUL'S JESUIT CHURCH

DETROIT - MICHIGAN

Sts. Peter and Paul's Jesuit Church was originally built as the Cathedral of the Detroit Diocese. Not much information concerning its erection is available, but in 1899, on the occasion of the celebration of the Golden Jubilee Anniversary of its consecration, a short history was prepared and printed in the souvenir program for this event. A copy of this program was found in the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library, and most of the information hereinafter recited, emanates from this source. Some material was also obtained from Farmer's History of Michigan, Michigan Pioneer Collections (Vol. 13 - 1888), Daily Advertiser's Directory (1850-1851), etc.

On June 29, 1844, Rt. Rev. Peter Paul Lefevere, Bishop of Detroit, laid the cornerstone of the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul, in honor of his patronal saints. On June 29, 1848, Bishop Lefevere consecrated the completed structure with fitting ceremonies.

The edifice was designed by F. Letourne, Architect and the Vicar General of the Diocese, Peter Kindekens, who also supervised the work of its erection. Its present outlines correspond with the original plans, except that the tall spire originally intended to form the central motif over the main entrance was never completed. (See Photograph #27-1)

The stone and mason work was done by William Burnell, Eustache Chapoton and George Sanders.

The interior framework was erected by John Brady, John Brennan, Andrew Myler and Maurice Nagel. The plaster work was under the direction of Alexandre Chapoton. The altars were built by Edward Meyers, including the wood carving. The "fine gelding, graining and decoration of the altars was the work of Charles W. Williams, an English convert from London and an artist of rare talent."

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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District #27 - 1

April 28, 1934.

STS. PETER AND PAUL'S JESUIT CHURCH

DETROIT - MICHIGAN

Except for the metal roof, there had been no contracts. Payments on a per diem basis were made each week as the work progressed. The Bishop made no appeal for pecuniary assistance, but "a thousand dollars had been contributed by some wealthy parties."

The organ was built by Henry Erben, a famous New York organ builder, and was then the second largest organ in the United States.

Anthony Paldi was occupied during more than a year in painting the fresco over the main altar. The confessionals and altar railing were executed and carved by Edward Meyers.

The interior of the cathedral was displeasing to the Bishop. Its heavy arched ceiling rested on two rows of massive columns out of all architectural proportions. The acoustical qualities were so faulty that although the pulpit stood in the middle of the church, the voice of the speaker could not be distinctly heard in the vicinity of the entrance.

In 1857, the Bishop had the columns reduced to two-thirds of their original size, moved the pulpit from the center of the church to its present location at the altar rail, arched and decorated the ceilings and replaced the old windows with stained glass. The cost of the building when all of these changes were completed was between \$70,000.00 and \$80,000.00. In the meantime, no adequate heating system had been devised.

In October, 1882, the church was embellished with a new side altar dedicated to the Sacred Heart.

In August, 1892, the church was renovated. New doors, floors, pews, confessionals, a heating system and electric lighting were installed. At this time, the church was also redecorated.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

District #27 - 1

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The Daily Advertiser's Directory, (1850-1851), describes the church as being "of the plainest Roman style, the exterior being relieved by Roman Ionic pilasters, and the roof being supported by twelve Tuscan columns. The interior is divided into a nave and two side aisles." It also records that the spire when completed will be two hundred feet high. The seating capacity is given as one thousand seats.

Farmer's History of Michigan places the original cost of the edifice at \$30,000.00 The organ cost \$6,000.00 and a chime of bells donated by a member of the parish, cost \$4,000.00

The Golden Jubilee, held May 28, 1899, had been delayed a year because of the Spanish-American War and for "other weighty reasons." At that time it was proposed to rebuild the front of the church in stone, crowning it with a lofty spire. A sketch embodying these ideas was prepared by Architect, Gordon W. Lloyd. The undertaking was to cost about \$25,000.00 Nothing came of this proposal, but in 1908 a new main altar was installed. This altar was imported from Italy and was made of Italian marble. It is enriched with carving and in character may be described as being late Italian Renaissance. The consecration of the altar took place December 8, 1908.

In 1917, extensive improvements were undertaken which included a new doorway at the main entrance, new vestibules which departed in form from the old vestibules and which were lined full height with marble, a new marble wainscoting in the body of the church, new marble altar rail, and replacement of all stained glass with ordinary commercial obscure glass. B. C. Wetzel and Co. were the architects to whom this work was entrusted, with the exception of the glass replacement for which they were not responsible.

Clair W. Ditchy, Architect
Fisher Building - Detroit.

Revised 1936, H. C. F.